

AMENDMENTS

In the Claims

The following is a marked-up version of the claims with the language that is underlined ("____") being added and the language that contains strikethrough ("—") being deleted:

1. (Currently Amended) A communication method comprising:

receiving an instant messaging (~~IM~~) message from a first sender to a first recipient;

waiting a predefined time interval for an input from the first recipient, the input being responsive to the ~~IM~~ instant messaging message;

determining whether input from the first recipient is received during the predetermined time interval;

in response to determining that no input from the first recipient is received during the predetermined time interval, prompting the first sender for permission to forward the ~~IM~~ instant messaging message from the first recipient to a second recipient and indicate, by the first recipient, that the ~~IM~~ instant messaging message originated from the first sender~~[[,]]~~;

wherein in response to receipt of the instant messaging message from the first sender to the first recipient and a determination that the first recipient is engaged in an ~~IM~~ instant messaging session with a second sender, the first sender is queried to join the ~~IM~~ instant messaging session, wherein in response to determining that the first sender desires to join the ~~IM~~ instant messaging session, the second sender is queried to determine whether to allow the first sender to join the ~~IM~~ instant messaging session, and wherein querying the second sender to allow the first sender to join the ~~IM~~ instant messaging session includes an automatically generated response to the ~~IM~~ instant messaging message from the first sender to the first recipient by an ~~IM~~ instant messaging client of the first recipient, without input from the first recipient and

joining the first sender in the instant messaging session with the first recipient and the second sender after receiving permission from the second sender.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising replying to the ~~IM~~ instant messaging message, wherein replying to the ~~IM~~ instant messaging message comprises:
providing a message indicating the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an ~~IM~~ instant messaging chat session.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising replying to the ~~IM~~ instant messaging message, wherein replying to the ~~IM~~ instant messaging message comprises:
providing a message requesting the first sender to wait for a predetermined time period.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising replying to the ~~IM~~ instant messaging message, wherein replying to the ~~IM~~ instant messaging message comprises:
periodically providing messages, the messages being periodically provided at predefined time intervals, each message indicating the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an ~~IM~~ instant messaging chat session during the corresponding predefined time interval.

5. (Currently Amended) A communication method comprising:
receiving an instant messaging (~~IM~~) message from a first sender to a first recipient;
determining whether input from the first recipient is received during a predetermined time interval;
in response to determining that no input is received from the first recipient during the predetermined time interval, determining whether the first recipient is engaged in an ~~IM~~ instant messaging chat session with a second sender; and

in response to determining that the first recipient is engaged in an IM instant messaging chat session with the second sender, prompting the first sender to forward the instant messaging message from the first recipient to a second recipient and indicating, by the first recipient, that the IM instant messaging message originated from the sender, wherein the instant messaging message is forwarded from the first recipient to the second recipient after receiving authorization from the first sender.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, further comprising: waiting a predefined time interval prior to replying to the IM instant messaging message.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, further comprising:
indicating to the first sender that the first recipient is engaged in an IM instant messaging chat session with the second sender.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, further comprising: periodically providing messages to the first sender, the messages being periodically provided at predefined time intervals, each message indicating the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an IM instant messaging chat session during the corresponding predefined time interval.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, further comprising:
indicating to the first sender that the first recipient is unavailable to engage in an IM instant messaging chat session with the first sender.

10. (Currently Amended) A non-transitory computer-readable medium encoded with a computer program such that when executed by a computer performs at least the following:

receive an instant messaging (~~IM~~) message from a sender to a first recipient;

wait a predefined time interval for an input from the first recipient, the input being responsive to the IM instant messaging message;

determine whether input from the first recipient is received during the predetermined time interval; and

in response to determining that no input from the first recipient is received during the predetermined time interval, prompt the sender to forward the instant messaging message from the first recipient to a second recipient and indicating, by the first recipient, that the IM instant messaging message originated from the sender, wherein the instant messaging message is forwarded from the first recipient to the second recipient after receiving authorization from the sender.

11. (Currently Amended) The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim 10, further configured to perform at least the following:

provide a message indicating the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an IM instant messaging chat session.

12. (Currently Amended) The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim 10, further configured to perform at least the following:

provide a message requesting the sender to wait for a predetermined time period.

13. (Currently Amended) The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim 10, further configured to perform at least the following:

periodically provide messages, the messages being periodically provided at predefined time intervals, each message indicating the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an ~~IM~~ instant messaging chat session during the corresponding predefined time interval.

14. (Currently Amended) A non-transitory computer-readable medium encoded with a computer program such that when executed by a computer performs at least the following:

receive an instant messaging (~~IM~~) message from a first sender to a first recipient;

determine whether input from the first recipient is received during a predetermined time interval;

in response to determining that no input from the first recipient is received during the predetermined time interval, determine whether the first recipient is engaged in an ~~IM~~ instant messaging chat session with second sender; and

in response to determining that the first recipient is engaged in an ~~IM~~ instant messaging chat session with the second sender prompt the first sender to forward the instant messaging message from the first recipient to a second recipient and indicating, by the first recipient, that the ~~IM~~ instant messaging message originated from the first sender, wherein the instant messaging message is forwarded from the first recipient to the second recipient after receiving authorization from the first sender.

15. (Currently Amended) The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim 14, further configured to perform at least the following:

wait a predefined time interval prior to replying to the ~~IM~~ instant messaging message.

16. (Currently Amended) The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim 14, further configured to perform at least the following:

indicate that the first recipient is engaged in an ~~IM~~ instant messaging chat session with the second sender.

17. (Currently Amended) The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim 14, further configured to perform at least the following:

periodically provide messages to the first sender, the messages being periodically provided at predefined time intervals, each message indicating the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an ~~IM~~ instant messaging chat session during the corresponding predefined time interval.

18. (Currently Amended) The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim 14, further configured to perform at least the following:

indicate that the first recipient is unavailable to engage in an ~~IM~~ instant messaging chat session with the first sender.

19. (Currently Amended) A communication system comprising:

means for receiving an instant messaging (~~IM~~) message from a sender to a first recipient;

means for determining whether the first recipient has provided an input during a predefined time interval;

means for, in response to determining that the first recipient has not provided an input during the predetermined time interval, determining whether the first recipient is engaged in an ~~IM~~ instant messaging chat session with another sender;

means for, in response to determining that the first recipient is engaged in an IM instant messaging chat session with another sender, replying to the IM instant messaging message; and

means for, in response to determining that the first recipient is not engaged in an IM instant messaging chat session with another user, prompting the sender to forward the instant messaging message from the first recipient to a second recipient and indicate, by the first recipient, that the IM instant messaging message originated from the sender, wherein the instant messaging message is forwarded from the first recipient to the second recipient after receiving authorization from the sender.

wherein all the means are embodied as hardware controlled by software.

20. (Currently Amended) A communication system comprising:

a memory component that stores:

instant-messaging (IM) receive logic configured to receive an IM instant messaging message from a sender to a first recipient;

first determining logic configured to determine whether the first recipient has provided an input during a predefined time interval;

second determining logic configured to, in response to determining that the first recipient has not provided an input during the predetermined time interval, determine whether the first recipient is engaged in an IM instant messaging chat session with another sender;

reply logic configured to, in response to determining that the first recipient is engaged in an IM instant messaging chat session with another sender, reply to the IM instant messaging message; and

prompting logic configured to, in response to determining that the first recipient is not engaged in an IM instant messaging chat session with another sender, prompt the sender to

forward the instant messaging message from the first recipient to a second recipient and indicating, by the first recipient, that the ~~IM~~ instant messaging message originated from the sender, wherein the instant messaging message is forwarded from the first recipient to the second recipient after receiving authorization from the sender.

21. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 20, wherein the determining logic comprises a timer configured to track elapsed time from a receiving of an ~~IM~~ instant messaging message the reply logic comprises message-generation logic configured to generate a message, the message being indicative of the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an ~~IM~~ instant messaging chat session.

22. (Canceled)

23. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 20, further comprising a processor configured to execute logic stored in the memory component.